



Program Information Guide

BOOST (Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today) Scholarship Program

Fiscal Year 2026 (2025-2026 School Year)

Maryland State Department of Education

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Deadline

May 9, 2025

No later than 11:59 p.m. EDT

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Program Description

The BOOST (Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today) Scholarship Program provides scholarship awards for some students who are eligible for the free or reduced-price school meals program ([FARMS](#)) to attend eligible nonpublic schools. Priority will be granted to students who qualify for FARMS and received a BOOST scholarship award last school year, as well as their siblings.

During the 2024-2025 school year, scholarship awards were granted to nearly 2,500 low-income students. Scholarship awards were sent to participating nonpublic schools in 19 jurisdictions across Maryland.

AUTHORIZATION

Budget bill for fiscal year 2026 ([House Bill 350](#))

GRANT OVERVIEW

Name of Grant Program

[BOOST \(Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today\) Scholarship Program](#)

Purpose

To provide scholarships to low-income students to attend a participating nonpublic school in Maryland.

Dissemination

This Program Information Guide was released on February 11, 2025

Deadline

Participating nonpublic school applications are due no later than March 6, 2025
Parent applications are due May 9, 2025

Program Period

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Funding Amount Available

\$9,000,000* + carry-over of unused funds from the previous year

Estimated Number of Scholarship Awards

Around 2,750 awards

Estimated Number of Participating Nonpublic Schools

175 nonpublic schools

* This is an estimate based on the funding appropriation during fiscal year 2025. The total funding amount available will be determined once the Budget Bill for fiscal year 2026 has been passed, which is anticipated to take place in April 2025.

Submission Instructions

Nonpublic schools must create an online BOOST school profile and submit an online application confirming participation no later than March 6, 2025. Participating nonpublic schools will also complete reporting requirements according to the timeline through the same [online application portal](#).

Parents must have completed the [online BOOST Scholarship application](#) no later than May 9, 2025 for any children they wish to be considered for a BOOST Scholarship award.

State Responsibilities

MSDE is responsible for establishing procedures for the application and award process for scholarships for students who are eligible for the free or reduced-price meals (FARMS) program. The procedures shall include consideration for award adjustments if an eligible student becomes ineligible during the course of the year. MSDE shall also compile and certify a list of applicants that ranks eligible students by family income expressed as a percent of the most recent federal poverty levels. MSDE shall submit the ranked list of applicants to the BOOST Advisory Board and make scholarship awards to eligible students as determined by the BOOST Advisory Board.

In order to meet its BOOST Program reporting requirements to the budget committees, MSDE shall specify a date by which participating nonpublic schools must submit information to MSDE. Any nonpublic schools that do not provide the necessary information by that specified date shall be ineligible to participate in the BOOST Program.

BOOST Advisory Board Responsibilities

There is a 7-member advisory board that makes decisions regarding scholarship awards and priorities, while also taking into account the guidance stated in legislation. The BOOST Advisory Board is appointed as follows: 2 members appointed by the Governor, 2 members appointed by the President of the Senate, 2 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and 1 member jointly appointed by the President and the Speaker to serve as the chair. The BOOST Advisory Board convenes in the summer and discusses applicant data, total funding available, as well as the status of renewal applicants. MSDE makes scholarship awards to eligible students as determined by the BOOST Advisory Board.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Allison Sanborn

BOOST Program Manager

410-767-3575

boost.msde@maryland.gov

Eligibility

FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

This funding opportunity is designed to award students with a scholarship to attend a BOOST participating nonpublic school in Maryland. To be eligible to participate in BOOST, a nonpublic school must*:

- Hold a certificate of approval from or be registered with the State Board of Education;
- Be approved to participate in the [Nonpublic Textbook Program](#);
- Provide more than only prekindergarten and kindergarten programs; and
- Comply with all BOOST reporting requirements by the specified date.

Notes:

Any nonpublic schools that do not submit reporting requirements by the specified deadline shall be ineligible to participate in the BOOST Program.

Participating nonpublic schools must comply with Title Vi of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Title 20, Subtitle 6 of the State Government Article, and not discriminate in student admissions, retention, or expulsion or other discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, national original, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. Nothing shall require any school or adopt any rule, regulation, or policy that conflicts with its religious or moral teachings. However, all participating schools must agree that they will not discrimination in student admissions, retention or expulsion or other discrimination against any student based on race, color, national original sexual orientation or gender identify or expression.

If a nonpublic school does not comply with these requirements, it shall reimburse MSDE all scholarship funds received under the BOOST program for the 2025-2026 school year and may not charge the student tuition and fees instead. The only other legal remedy for violation of this provision is the ineligibility for participating in the BOOST Program.

* Program requirements described here are based on legislation for fiscal year 2025. These requirements are subject to change once the Budget Bill for fiscal year 2026 has been passed, which is anticipated to take place in April 2025.

FOR STUDENTS

A student is eligible to be considered for a scholarship award if the student:

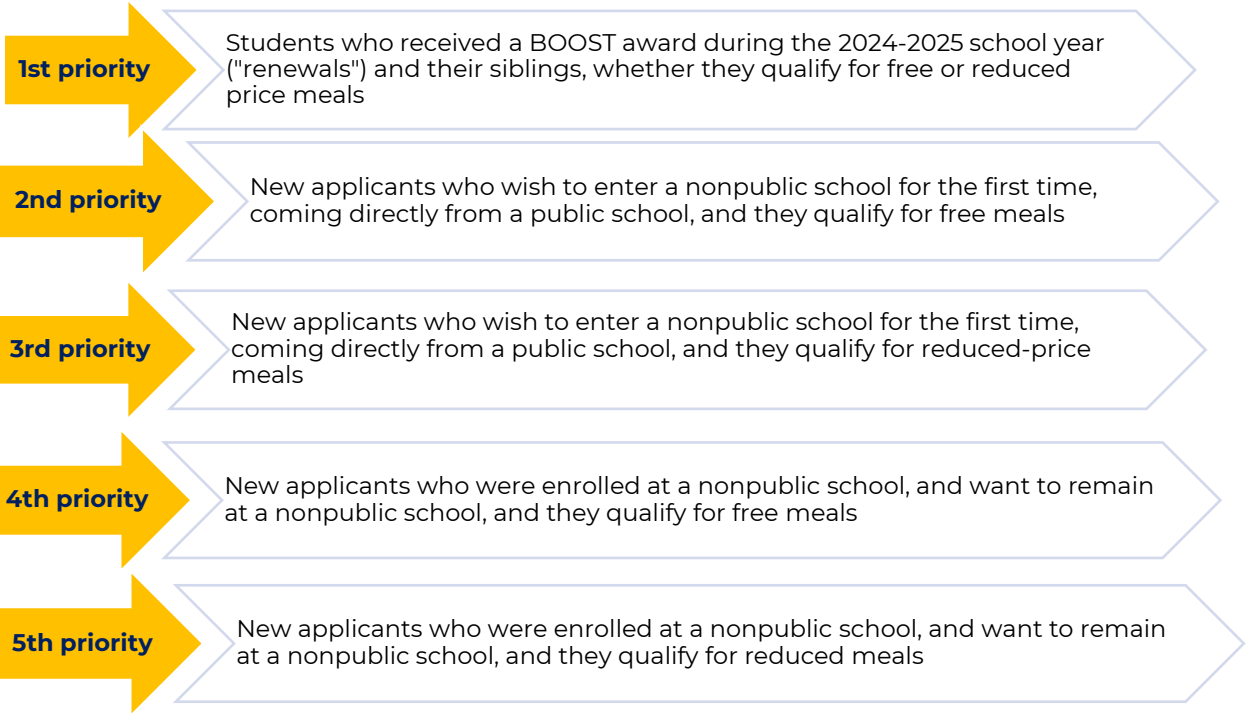
- Will be in grade kindergarten – grade 12 in the 2025-2026 school year;
- Is enrolled (or plans to enroll) at a participating nonpublic school for the 2025-2026 school year; and
- Meets the income eligibility to qualify for free and reduced-price meals ([FARMs](#)).

Notes:

[FARMs](#) eligibility is determined through the application review process. Through the online application, parents/guardians submit their Federal 1040 tax returns for the prior year. Their applications are ranked in order of priority and as a percentage of the federal poverty index.

The number of students who apply for a scholarship usually exceeds the funding available. The BOOST Advisory Board will convene and decide the funding priorities and the award values. Therefore, students must be ranked in order of priority and household income in the following way:

All students must qualify for FARMs and be enrolled (or plan to enroll) at a participating nonpublic school as a K-12 student for the 2025-2026 school year. Then...



Use of Scholarship Funds

The BOOST Scholarship award must be deposited by the participating nonpublic school and applied to the student's tuition account at the school in which the student is enrolled. Funds must be used for tuition and fees only. Funds may not be used for transportation or meals. The award may not be transferred to another student.

Notes:

The scholarship check is sent to the school, and the parent/guardian must come to the school to endorse the back of the check. The BOOST scholarship award may be reduced if it exceeds the tuition owed to the school.

For example:

- The school's annual tuition is \$10,000 and the school provides the student a discount of \$4,000. The parent is only responsible for paying \$6,000 in annual tuition to the school.
- The BOOST award value comes out to be \$7,750, but it will be reduced to \$6,000 because it can't be higher than the tuition the family is responsible for paying.
- If the parent already made tuition payments over the summer, then the school may owe the parent a refund.

If the student was not enrolled and/or did not attend any school days, the participating school must return the undeposited scholarship check to MSDE.

If the student withdraws or is expelled from the school before April 30, 2026, the participating school must alert MSDE and send a refund of the prorated value of the award. The scholarship check(s) must be mailed to MSDE via certified mail to the address below:

Maryland State Department of Education
Attn: Allison Sanborn, BOOST Scholarship Program, 7th floor
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

To calculate a prorated amount, divide the number of school days the student was enrolled by the total number of school days in your school year and then multiply the result by the total BOOST award amount, rounded to the nearest dollar. Subtract the prorated amount from the BOOST Award amount and refund that amount to the BOOST Program.

Sample scenario:

Matthew Smith accepted a scholarship award for \$1,000. He enrolled at your school and attended school for 10 days, then withdrew. There are 180 total student school days at your school. To calculate the prorated BOOST refund amount, use the following formula:

- $10 \text{ school days} \div 180 \text{ total possible school days} = 0.056$
- $0.056 \times \$1,000 = \56 (no cents, round to the nearest dollar)
- $\$1,000 - \$56 = \$944$ refund to MSDE
- Deposit the scholarship check. Send MSDE a refund check in the amount of \$944.

Application Requirements

FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

Only schools who were approved to participate in the Nonpublic Textbook Program will be invited to apply for the BOOST Scholarship Program. In February 2025, eligible nonpublic schools will submit an online application to participate in the BOOST Program. A list of schools that have chosen to participate in the BOOST program can be found on the BOOST [webpage](#).

Participating nonpublic schools must create a school profile through the [online BOOST Scholarship application](#) in order to participate for the 2025-2026 school year. Reporting requirements will also be submitted through the same application portal.

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/Guardians must submit an application through the [online BOOST Scholarship application](#) for their child(ren) to receive a BOOST Scholarship award. As a part of that online application, parents/guardians will be asked to provide the following information:

- The child's full name as it appears on their birth certificate;
- Whether the child received a BOOST Scholarship award last year;
- Whether the child is the sibling of a student who received a BOOST Scholarship award last year;
- The grade the child will be entering for the 2025-2026 school year;
- The nonpublic school that the school the child will be attending for the 2025-2026 school year;
- The type of school and the school name in which the child is currently enrolled;
- Whether the child has a learning disability and receives special education services in school (this must later be confirmed by the nonpublic school); and
- The Federal 1040 Tax Returns for the prior year (2024), uploaded in pdf format.

Student applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness on a rolling basis.

Scholarship Award Process

The process of disseminating student scholarship awards will take place following these steps:

1. Student applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness on a rolling basis.
2. After May 30, 2025, all application data is collected and shared with the BOOST Advisory Board.
3. The BOOST Advisory Board will convene in summer 2025 and determine the amount of the base scholarship award, the amount of the additional award for students receiving special education students, and any other award criteria.
4. The number of awards that can be offered to students is calculated, and those parents/guardians will receive notification via email that their child is being offered an award. Parents/guardian must accept or decline the award by the deadline in their award notification.
5. Participating nonpublic schools must then confirm that the student being offered the award is enrolled at their school. For any students whose parents indicated that they receive special education services, the school must confirm this by uploading a copy of the student's IEP, IFSP or 504 Plan.
6. Once all schools have completed enrollment confirmation, MSDE prepares for the BOOST scholarship checks to be printed at the Office of the Comptroller of Maryland. Schools also have three other reports that must be submitted to MSDE before award checks can be mailed.
7. Scholarship checks are picked up from the Office of the Comptroller and packaged in FedEx envelopes at MSDE headquarters. Schools will receive a FedEx envelope containing all of the scholarship checks for confirmed students at their school who were offered an award.

Steps 4 through 7 will continue as parents/guardian decline awards, and funds become available. No awards will be offered after December 12, 2025.

Application and Award Timeline

A timeline of important events is below:

Date	Milestone
February 11, 2025	The application for nonpublic schools opens.
February 13, 2025	MSDE will hold a customer service session for eligible nonpublic schools.
March 6, 2025	The application for nonpublic schools closes.
March 10, 2025	The application for parents/guardians to apply for a scholarship opens.
March 11 & March 20, 2025	MSDE will hold customer service sessions for parents/guardians.
March 13 & March 25, 2025	MSDE will hold customer service sessions with a certified interpreter for parents/guardians.
March 12 - May 9, 2025	MSDE will hold weekly virtual assistance office hours on Wednesdays from 12-1pm
May 9, 2025	The application for parents/guardians to apply for a scholarship closes.
June/July 2025	The BOOST Advisory Board will convene to determine the value of the base award and additional award amounts for special education students.
August 2025	MSDE will alert parents/guardians of the result of the eligibility review.
August 27, 2025	MSDE will hold a customer service session for participating nonpublic BOOST schools
September 19, 2025	Early bird deadline for nonpublic schools to complete reporting requirements.
October 17, 2025	Deadline for nonpublic schools to complete reporting requirements.
October – December 2025	MSDE will send out scholarship awards. No new awards will be offered after December 12, 2025.

Reporting Requirements

Participating nonpublic schools must comply with the following reporting requirements prior to receiving any BOOST scholarship checks. These requirements will not be finalized until legislation is enrolled in April and are subject to change with the passing of the Budget Bill.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

While it is not required that nonpublic schools employ certified teachers, nonpublic schools participating in the BOOST program must report the number of certified and non-certified teachers at the school during the 2025-2026 school year in the following subject areas: Early Childhood, Elementary Education, English, Mathematics, Reading, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, the Arts, and World Languages.

If a school employs a teacher who serves as the Arts teacher as well as the World Language teacher, the school should only count that teacher once in their report.

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL/EXPULSION

Participating BOOST schools must provide the number of students who received a BOOST Scholarship award last during the 2024-2025 school year and who were subsequently withdrawn or expelled from school, as well as the reason, and the number of days the student attended school.

ASSESSMENT DATA

Participating BOOST schools must administer a national, norm-referenced standardized assessment chosen from the list of assessments published by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) that qualifies nonpublic schools for the [National Blue Ribbon Schools Program](#). Participating BOOST schools must administer an approved assessment in English Language Arts, Math, and Science to all students, not just BOOST students, in specific grade bands.

The nonpublic school must report the name of the approved ELA, Math, and Science assessment administered to students, the criteria for proficiency, how many BOOST students and non-BOOST students were tested, and how many BOOST students and non-BOOST students met the proficiency criteria.

Assessments must be administered in the following grade bands:

English Language Arts Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year for students in grades 3 through 8 • At least once for students in grades 9 through 12
Mathematics Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year for students in grades 3 through 8 • At least once for students in grades 9 through 12
Science Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least once for students in grades 3 through 5 • At least once for students in grades 6 through 8 • At least once for students in grades 9 through 12

STUDENT ENROLLMENT CONFIRMATION

Participating BOOST schools must confirm that a student being offered an award is actually enrolled at their school. As part of the enrollment confirmation report, the school will report the following information:

- The student's base tuition
- Any non-BOOST financial aid or discounts that the student receives
- Any additional fees or tuition charged to the student's family if the student is enrolled in a special education program to address a disability
- A copy of the student's IEP, IFSP or 504 plan if the student is receiving special education services on the basis of an identified disability

MSDE will take this information into consideration in calculating the student's adjusted BOOST scholarship award.

Note:

Any nonpublic schools that do not submit reporting requirements by the specified deadline shall be ineligible to participate in the BOOST Program. If a nonpublic school does not comply with these requirements, it shall reimburse MSDE all scholarship funds received under the BOOST program for the 2025-2026 school year and may not charge the student tuition and fees instead. The only other legal remedy for violation of this provision is the ineligibility for participating in the BOOST Program.

Customer Service Support Sessions

FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

MSDE will hold several customer service support sessions for interested applicants. During these sessions, MSDE personnel will provide important information and answer questions. To attend a session, click a session link below:

Thursday, February 13, 2025

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

During this session for eligible nonpublic schools, we will review eligibility, participation, and reporting requirements.

[Click here to join the session](#)

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

During this session for participating schools, we will review the reporting requirements in detail.

[Click here to join the session](#)

MSDE staff will also be available to provide technical assistance throughout the BOOST Scholarship application and award process. Contact Allison Sanborn at boost.mde@maryland.gov or (410) 767-3575 with any questions or concerns.

Please visit the BOOST Scholarship Program [webpage](#) for important information and updates.

FOR PARENTS

MSDE will hold several customer service support sessions for interested applicants. During these sessions, MSDE staff will provide important information for parents/guardians on eligibility, the application itself, the timeline, as well as answer questions.

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

[Click here to join the session](#)

Thursday, March 20, 2025

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Click here to join the session](#)

Weekly on Wednesdays (March through May)

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

[Click here to join the session](#)

The following sessions will be held in both English and Spanish:

Thursday, March 13, 2025

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

[Click here to join the session](#)

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[Click here to join the session](#)

MSDE staff will also be available to provide technical assistance throughout the BOOST Scholarship application and award process. Contact Allison Sanborn at boost.mde@maryland.gov or (410) 767-3575 with any questions or concerns.

Please visit the BOOST Scholarship Program [webpage](#) for important information and updates.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For inquiries related to Department policy, please contact:

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